

## “Without Women, Peace Is Incomplete”: Women's History Month Online

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from the Sahel

12 November 2025

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 27 October-09 November 2025, assessing observed narratives based on 14 months of systematic social media monitoring in [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#) and [Niger](#).



**SUMMARY:** Between 27 October and 02 November 2025, **244 public posts** on the aid sector across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger generated **265 comments**, reflecting a slight increase in online engagement (up 8.6% from 244 comments between 20–26 October). Online discussions remained quieter than earlier in October, when reactions to the INSO arrests and new NGO banking rules in Burkina Faso had driven a sharp spike in attention. In the following week, between 03–09 November, **239 posts** generated **289 comments**, marking a further 9.1% increase in engagement compared to 27 October–02 November. During these two weeks, the inauguration of the newly constructed Galgouli Border Police Post, financed and supported by IOM, received appreciative reactions, while gender-related initiatives and campaigns dominated post volume. Engagement with these topics remained limited but was largely neutral to positive, with only one isolated negative comment related to gender-based violence and child marriage.

**PAST EDITIONS:** [I Don't Think He's A Civilian](#) (20-26 Oct) | [The Country Is Now Governed](#) (13-19 Oct) | [We Must Kill Them](#) (06-12 Oct) | [Without Transparency](#) (29 Sept-05 Oct) | [It Is A Disgrace](#) (15-28 Sept) | [Keep Eyes on Agadez](#) (01-14 Sept) | [Burkina Faso 🇸🇩 Has To Cut All Ties With ALL International Organizations](#) (18-31 Aug) | [Mixed Opinion](#) (11-17 Aug) | [All](#)

## Key Takeaways

### Burkina Faso: Media Coverage of IOM-Supported Border Police Infrastructure

On 30 October, five Burkina Faso–based media outlets, including state media, reported on Facebook on the inauguration of the newly constructed Galgouli Border Police Post, financed and supported by IOM. The posts reached an estimated 348,000 users and generated 26 public comments, a modest but non-negligible level of engagement for security-related aid content. All posts featured images of uniformed government and security officials alongside IOM branding, framing the event squarely within a narrative of state authority.

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The comments were predominantly neutral towards IOM but positive towards the government and the security forces, with praise largely directed at national actors rather than the international partner. A smaller subset of users expressed general appreciation for the initiative itself without distinguishing between state and IOM roles. In parallel, at least one pro-government account, exhibiting patterns consistent with AI-assisted content production, engaged with the topic by amplifying state-centred narratives, presenting the project as evidence of strengthened national sovereignty and effective border control rather than as a conventional aid intervention. This type of amplification contributes to the increasingly complex blurring of lines between humanitarian or technical assistance and perceived political endorsement of the ruling authorities, a dynamic that continues to shape how such projects are interpreted online. Alongside positive reactions to the announcement, one user raised practical concerns such as road quality and alleged extortion at the border, pointing to ongoing governance issues. One sceptical remark warning that donated equipment should be “scanned” to avoid covert

surveillance closely mirrors the allegations made in [May 2025](#) when a UN motorcycle donation triggered widespread speculation about hidden trackers and foreign monitoring devices.

“You should always scan and scrutinise everything you are given before using it. You never know, even a simple pencil given to you could be used to spy on you. So be careful...” (“Il faut toujours bien scanner et passer à la loupe tout ce qui nous est offert avant toute utilisation. On ne sait jamais, même à parti d'un simple crayon à vous offert, on peut vous espionner. Alors attention...”)

### What This Tells Us

- Although the project was IOM-supported, most praise targeted government actors and the security forces, suggesting public approval is attached more to national institutions than to the international partner. The UN agency appears perceived as a technical contributor rather than a primary actor, generating neither notable enthusiasm nor significant criticism.
- In some representations of the project, aid activities are portrayed as directly supporting the government’s security policy and national vision, thereby creating a perceived link between government initiatives and international aid.
- Praise framed in terms of sovereignty, independence, and national pride indicates broad support from the readers of mainly government media for initiatives that reinforce state control of borders and security infrastructure.
- The isolated espionage-related comment reflects recurring regional narratives around foreign assistance, though here it remained marginal.
- Engagement was modest, dispersed, and largely supportive; no narrative clusters suggest that this content is unlikely to evolve into a wider controversy without external triggers. At the same time, this may reinforce perceptions of international alignment with specific political actors, potentially provoking loss of trust from communities that do not support the government.

## Women's History Month Online

Between 01 October and 09 November 2025, a total of 149 social media posts, 14 in Burkina Faso, 30 in Niger and 105 in Mali related to gender-focused activities and campaigns, These posts generated 98 comments, **74 positive**, **neutral** and **three negative**.

Thematically, discussions focused on **women's health**, **education**, and **leadership in peacebuilding**, alongside continued campaigns addressing **child marriage**, **gender-based violence (GBV)**, and **breast cancer awareness**. Examples of posts included *UNFPA's Mali* advocacy post on preventable maternal deaths, **an INGO in Burkina Faso** posts emphasizing women's rights and resilience, a youth-led initiative in Nouna, Burkina Faso, raising awareness about early marriage and girls' education. Another LINGO engaged in creative workshops promoting gender equality.

Public engagement was overall supportive, the majority of the comments congratulated the organizations and teams, and expressed appreciation for the visibility of women's voices in public life, like engagement on posts marking the 25th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and security.

- **"Resolution 1325 is not just a text: it is a call to action to build a world where women are full participants in peace and security."** ("Cette Résolution 1325 n'est pas seulement un texte : c'est un appel à l'action pour construire un monde où les femmes sont actrices à part entière de la paix et de la sécurité.")
- **A highly symbolic and hopeful campaign... Congratulations to the NGO XXX and its partners for this unwavering commitment to a more just, equitable, and resilient Sahel.** ("Une campagne hautement symbolique et porteuse d'espoir... Félicitations à l'ONG FAD et à ses partenaires pour cet engagement constant en faveur d'un Sahel plus juste, plus équitable et plus résilient").
- **"Without women, peace is incomplete. 25 years of Resolution 1325, 25 years of commitment to continue together. #Resolution1325"** ("Sans les femmes, la paix est incomplète. 25 ans de la Résolution 1325, 25 ans d'engagement à poursuivre ensemble. #Résolution1325")

Other topics such as breast cancer awareness events and economic empowerment programs received positive comments.

- **"We are proof that this support has changed our lives and the lives of those around us... Long live the National Forum for Women's Empowerment!"** ("Nous sommes la preuve que cet accompagnement a changé notre vie et celle de nos entourages... Vive le Forum National Pour L'Autonomisation des Femmes!")
- Between 02-09 November only three comment showed critical or resistant view under a post addressing child marriage and the importance of girls education. The users questioned the relevance of ongoing awareness campaigns, considering it a repetitive gender messaging. This response is close to previous week's response where three negative comments were identified under posts on child Marriage and GBV.
- **"It's not better to raise awareness about something else now. This theme is outdated."** ("C'est pas mieux de sensibiliser sur autre chose maintenant. Ce thème est caduque.")

Overall, engagement during this period remained modest but distinctly positive, particularly around themes of women's empowerment and participation of women in peacebuilding. At the same time, as in previous weeks, some campaigns still attract critical comments, like campaigns on **gender-related health topics**, **FGM**, child marriage and girls education.

## Patterns of Aid Narratives on Social Media Continued

Data from the period **27 October-02 November 2025** indicates a continued slowdown in online engagement with aid-related content across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. A total of **244 public posts** were identified, generating **265 comments**, marking a further slight increase in online engagement up 8.6% from 244 comments between **20–26 October**. This confirms that the spike in attention surrounding the INSO incident in early October has now fully subsided, with online discussions returning to more routine levels of interaction.

The distribution of negative sentiment remained broadly consistent with last week but shows a slight shift away from INGOs. During the monitoring period, 40% of negative comments were directed at INGOs, while 13.30% targeted LNGOs, and 47% were directed toward UN agencies.

The distribution of engagement by organisation type also evolved marginally from last week:

- **INGOs** accounted for **26%** of total engagement (down from 60%),
- **UN agencies** represented **48%** (up slightly from 27%),
- **LNGOs** generated **25%** (up slightly from 13%).

Between **03–09 November 2025**, activity rose again. **239 public posts** produced **289 comments**, a further **9.1% increase** from 27 Oct–02 Nov (265 comments). Negative sentiment shifted away from the earlier INGO focus and was split between **INGOs (57%)** and **LNGOs (42.9%)**, while **UN agencies (0%)** drew no negative comments.

The distribution of engagement by organisation type also evolved marginally from last week:

- **UN agencies: 57%**
- **INGOs: 22%**
- **LNGOs: 22%**

The modest increase in engagement around local NGOs may be linked to ongoing visibility of community-level gender and health initiatives.

The overall decline in comment volume suggests reduced public intensity around aid-sector debates following two highly reactive weeks earlier in October. While sentiment remains largely neutral to negative, the tone of conversation has stabilised, with fewer negative comments detected (nine negative comments between 20-26 October compared to 1,655 negative comments between **06-12 October**).

As in earlier periods, these findings should be read with caution. Technical issues affecting geolocation may still lead to under-detection of posts from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. These findings are based solely on publicly accessible content and may not reflect discussions on private or encrypted platforms.

## Prominent Influencer Fuels Geopolitical Debate Over Russian Accusations at the UN

On November 4th, 2025, a public figure with over **30,000 followers**, previously tracked for consistent engagement with security and geopolitical issues in the Sahel, posted on **X** about Russia's statement before the **UNSC** that **France** and **Ukraine** were supporting **terrorism in Mali**. The post, which aligned with narratives critical of Western involvement in Africa, generated 100 comments, and sparked a highly polarised discussion.

Supportive comments praised Russia "for standing with Mali" and condemned western powers for alleged destabilization in Mali. Some responses took a more emotional or conspiratorial tone:

- **"Cursed be Ukraine, France, and Algeria... may divine wrath fall upon these diabolical nations."** ("Maudit soit l'Ukraine, la France, et l'Algérie... que la colère divine s'abatte sur ces nations diaboliques.")

A few comments focused on Wagner's role in Mali. Some users argued that Russian forces were legitimately deployed to fight terrorism at the request of local authorities. It is part of a pro-Russian narrative.

- **"No, the French troops of Operation Barkhane fought against terrorists in the Sahel for years, but without decisive results, leading to their withdrawal in 2022, which left a vacuum that jihadists then exploited. Wagner, at the request of the local military juntas, took over to..."** (" Non, les troupes françaises de Barkhane ont lutté contre les terroristes au Sahel pendant des années, mais sans résultats décisifs, menant à un retrait en 2022 qui a laissé un vide exploité par les djihadistes. Wagner, à la demande des juntas locales, a pris le relais pour des...")

Although the post referenced the **UNSC**, none of the comments engaged with that aspect. Instead, users interpreted the issue through **local and anti-Western lenses**, focusing on **France–Russia competition** and **foreign influence in the Sahel**.

Show translation

La Russie accuse officiellement la France et l'Ukraine de soutenir le terrorisme au Mali devant le Conseil de Sécurité de l'ONU.

Par conséquent, la Russie se joint au Mali pour réclamer l'ouverture d'une enquête internationale, avec une confrontation directe sur

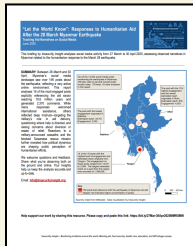


## Other resources

### Perceptions of the aid sector on social media platforms

Intentions and practices of the aid sector are often misunderstood on social media. Being aware of how aid activities are discussed and perceived online is an important element of reputation management and is essential for maintaining access in crisis contexts. Insecurity Insight has been analysing social media discussions in Myanmar to better understand how the earthquake response was perceived. During this process, we identified how civilian activities are called into question following the bombing of schools and hospitals, and how the lack of visible aid efforts contributes to misinformation and misperceptions. Read our five briefs below:

#### “Let The World Know”



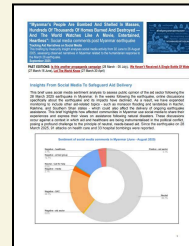
#### “We Haven’t Received A Single Bottle Of Water”



#### “Is This Another Propaganda Campaign”



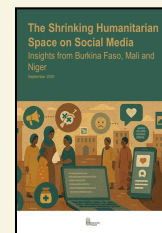
#### “Myanmar’s People Are Bombed”



#### “The UN Shouldn’t Even Exist Anymore”



**The Shrinking Humanitarian Space on Social Media:** This report provides an in-depth analysis of how public online narratives are reshaping the operating environment of the aid sector in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. It focuses on the risks and harms posed by harmful public narratives that frame aid as illegitimate, politicised or foreign controlled. These narratives are steadily shrinking the humanitarian space. As online and offline threats increasingly converge, the report argues that safeguarding digital legitimacy is no longer optional - it is essential to the continuation of principled, neutral, and effective humanitarian action. The findings are especially urgent given the fragility of the Sahel context.. In [English](#) and [French](#).



## Data Use and Privacy Disclaimer

This report includes analysis of publicly available social media content collected from open platforms. All data has been anonymised to remove or obscure identifying details, and no content from closed groups was used. The analysis was conducted in the public interest and in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), under a legitimate interest basis. The purpose of this analysis is to support humanitarian dialogue, inform policy, protect aid workers and those they help, and contribute to public interest research. This document is published by Insecurity Insight - a Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) organisation committed to the Humanitarian Principles.

We welcome questions and feedback. Share what you're observing both on the ground and online. Your insights help us keep the analysis accurate and up-to-date. Email: [info@insecurityinsight.org](mailto:info@insecurityinsight.org). Join our efforts to protect humanitarian space. Subscribe to our [Social Media Monitoring](#) mailing list. Find more resources at the [Social Media Monitoring](#) website. **Help support our work by sharing this resource. Please copy and paste this link: <https://bit.ly/27Oct-09Nov2025SMMBrief>**

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